

## **Pertussis (whooping cough) and Day Care Centers in Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Immunization Program wants to alert all day care center operators that a major outbreak of pertussis (or whooping cough) is occurring in Wisconsin and what day care operators should do. To date over 1,700 cases have been reported from 53 counties in Wisconsin. This is approximately 8 times higher than what is reported in a typical year.

- **Signs and symptoms of pertussis**

Pertussis is a bacterial disease that is spread through the air by direct face to face contact with a case of pertussis. Pertussis begins with cold like symptoms and a cough that becomes much worse over a period of 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits") followed by a whooping noise as the patient struggles to inhale air. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. There is generally no fever. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching their breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough.

- **DTaP Vaccine**

Pertussis is most serious in infants and preschoolers who are behind schedule or have not received any DTaP vaccine. DTaP vaccine, which is required in day care centers, is only licensed for children ages of 2 months through 6 years of age. Please make sure children in your center are up to date with the required doses of DTaP vaccine.

- **What you should do if a child in your center has pertussis**

Report the illness to your local health department immediately. Health department staff will assist with follow up and taking the steps necessary to prevent disease in exposed children and staff.

A child or staff member with pertussis must be kept home until that child or staff member has received at least 5 days of antibiotic treatment. The antibiotic treatment will make the person non-contagious and therefore allow him or her to return to day care after the 5 days of treatment. However, the symptoms of pertussis may still be present after the completion of the course of treatment.

Day care center operators should be careful in screening new enrollees and walk-ins and not accept those that may be symptomatic with pertussis.

- **More information**

For more information please contact your local health department or the Wisconsin Immunization Program website at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pertussis2.htm>